Preface

What are the difficulties in the formation process of resource and environmental policy? Little is known about the history and specific characteristics of environmental policy formation. Moreover, differences of environmental policy formation in developed and developing countries have rarely been discussed in detail. This book addresses this knowledge gap, traces the origin, and describes the evolution process of environmental policies and administration both in developed and developing countries. It also contributes new insights to the definition of “environmental issues” by adopting a “path dependence” approach and depicting its policy formation process as a public policy.

This volume is the product of a joint research project titled “Formation and Operation of Law, Institution, and Organization concerning Resource and Environmental Policy” at the Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). The members of this project repeatedly discussed the concepts of “resources and environment” as well as environmental policies, discovering that the role of state and chronological order are significant in analyzing the policy formation processes. Through case studies of various regions, the contributors identify the major obstacles hindering the evolution of environmental policy formation and try to determine how these can be overcome.

Jun Ui, one of the pioneers of studies on environmental problems in Japan, looked back to around 1970 and commented on his experience of reading a number of essays on pollution problems at that time. He wrote: “The proportion of the essays that were worth reading was small, but there were always two elements in them. One was a reference to the historical aspect of these problem, and the other was a reflection on how we have intensified the pollution problem to this point” (*Journal of Environmental Sociology*, Vol. 1, 1995, pp. 98–99).

Fifty years later, the “reflections” are not necessarily the same for us as in 1970. One of the possible forms of “reflection” for us today is to continue to ask, using a historical perspective, why appropriate measures were not taken until industrial pollution and environmental problems became so serious with victims of pollution suffering for such a long time, and why the possible measures were not fully implemented, even though the problem had existed for a long time and possible measures were known.

Experiences of past failures can be easily forgotten, and the failures have been repeated again. The experience of the developed countries has not always been fully utilized by the latecomer countries. An important task for the social sciences is to find out why the failures of the past have been repeated, and if the causes of these failures lie in the structural problems inherent in our society.

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